



I first heard about The Technical Centre for Agriculture and Rural Cooperation ACP-EU ([CTA](#)) when I joined Women of Uganda Network ([WOUGNET](#)) as an information and Communications officer in 2008, through a project that CTA was funding known as “ [Enhancing Access to Agricultural Information](#) ” in Northern Uganda. I had earlier on read a couple of books published by CTA from NARO-Kawanda but I had never clearly understood what CTA’s mandate was.

In 2009, I applied for support to attend the CTA annual seminar and submitted an abstract on the following topic: “ [The use of web 2.0 tools for sustainable agriculture: A case of small scale farmers in Uganda](#) ”. The theme of the seminar was “ [Role of the Media in Agricultural and Rural Development in ACP countries](#) ”. I was honoured when my abstract was accepted and I was invited to attend the event in Brussels. This was my first trip out of Africa and also the beginning of building a strong relationship with CTA as an individual and on behalf of WOUGNET the organisation I was working for.

In Brussels I was overwhelmed by the amount of knowledge and exposure that I received right from the presentations that were made, to the information material which was shared freely inform of publications. It was during the 2009 CTA annual seminar that I met very influential people in the fields of media, communication and agriculture. Most of them have contributed to and shaped my professional career. At the event I met the social media team which was responsible for reporting and broadcasting the event via various online platforms in real time. It was at this point in time that I learnt more about how to use Twitter and blogs as reporting tools, a skill that benefited WOUGNET to-date.

As a young participant, I was ready to make the best out of this one-in-a-lifetime opportunity and indeed it didn’t take long before I met Giacomo Rambaldi a senior programme coordinator in charge of ICT and Innovation at CTA and had a chat with him about ICTs, networking and opportunities for remote collaboration. A few months after the event in Brussels, CTA accepted my application to work as a remote intern in the framework of the Distance Mentorship

Programme offered by CTA at that time. I was assigned to the 'ICT and Innovation programme' under the direct supervision of Giacomo and I took on the internship from January 2010 to June 2010. It was in the course of this internship that I went through a life changing experience.

I learnt how to moderate and animate discussion lists like the Web2froDev DGroup, how to promote the dissemination of selected online resources, monitor and improve visibility and ranking of websites among others. I even learned how use Joomla (CMS) and publish edited content, and how to collaborate and develop content remotely using SharePoint. Read more about [my CTA internship experience](#) . This six-month experience supported my professional development and guided me during my Msc in Information Systems. I still apply a lot of the knowledge I gained during the internship both at my current workplace [Text to Change](#) and during my trainings.

In 2010 I was given an opportunity to attend a [Web 2.0 Learning Opportunity](#) co-organised by CTA and the Baraka Agricultural College in Molo, Kenya. During the 5-day event we were exposed hands-on to the use of Web 2.0 applications in the context of development work. We were introduced to the concept of Web 2.0, discussed opportunities and threats of being present on the web, learned how to launch advanced searches, set up alerts and use RSS feeds. We also started using Wikis and GoogleDocs to collaborate remotely on text documents as well as using Skype to converse across borders at no cost. Read about [my experience](#)

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When back in Uganda, I shared acquired skills with my workmates at WOUGNET where I worked then and I trained WOUGNET network members in rural Uganda. Thanks to CTA! The ARDYIS Youth Essay Contest is an additional initiative run by CTA I was exposed to.

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Focused on Youth, ICT in Agriculture and Rural Development the contest aimed at identifying innovative solutions to challenges faced by youth in agriculture and rural areas using Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). It was the first of its kind. The essay contest was open to young people, aged 18 - 25 years, from urban or rural areas of Africa, Caribbean and Pacific countries. A total of twelve finalists from the six regions were shortlisted. I was among the young women / professionals who submitted an article responding to the call

on: "How young people are using ICTs innovatively in Agriculture". I described a case of a young fruit grower Mr. Gilbert Egwel from Northern Uganda in Apac district. During the CTA 2010 annual seminar, after defending my essay before a panel of judges, I was nominated among the awardees of the East Africa Region and I received a prestigious trophy from Mr. Michael Hailu, CTA's current Director.

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It was my very first award and a further turning point in my life. It exposed me to wider opportunities and made me a role model to my peers and many young women. More CTA funded opportunities include my invitation to attend an annual Food Agriculture and Natural Resource Policy Analysis Network (FANRPAN) high level regional food security policy dialogue whose theme was : "Advocating for the active engagement of the youth in the agricultural value CHAIN". I made a presentation about Youth Initiatives in my Country Uganda to delegates from NEPAD, Platform for African and European Partnerships in Agricultural Research & Development (PAEPARD), The Pan-African Agribusiness and Agro-industry Consortium (PAANAC), The German Agency for Technical Development (GIZ) and Southern African Confederation of Agricultural Unions (SACAU) among others. This took place from 18th to 23rd September 2011 in Swaziland.

And finally, the most exciting of all was attending the 2nd Global Knowledge Sharefair in Rome, Italy. I was granted support by CTA and was chosen to be part of the social media reporting team as well as co-facilitator for the session on Using Twitter. The [2nd Global Knowledge Sharefair](#) was a compelling, exciting and "out-of-the-box" event, offering participants creative and innovative learning and sharing opportunities, thus equipping them to better influence future rural development activities.

Over a period of two years, my life has changed. I am so grateful to CTA for the opportunities offered. I would never have wished for something better than this. My communication, technical, writing and online skills have improved overtime. I was able to use these skills at WOUGNET and I have continued using them at [Text to change](#) the organisation I currently work for through training and increasing its web presence. I look forward to more up-coming opportunities at CTA especially with the youth in the ACP region.

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How CTA has changed my life in a matter of two years ...

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